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ABSTRACT

Theorists and researchers have indicated that the Group Oral Review (GOR) provides valuable classroom interaction. Some objectives of the GOR approach to reading (for developmental studies reading students) are as follows: to reinforce the process used in a reading assignment, to aid development of metacognitive awareness, to emphasize the idea that any one skill or process applied to written material as an individual assignment should be seen as only part of a whole set of skills or strategies that must be used in the total act of reading, to develop confidence and fluency in oral expression or interpretation of written ideas and the thought processes related to reading, to develop the ability to listen, to recognize the importance of listening, and to develop the practice of notetaking. The assignment for GOR involves one piece of written material, to be analyzed by two or more students, each of whom will be assigned to use different types of skills. After assignments are completed, all students sit in round-table discussion and explain what they were supposed to do, how they did it, and what they found out, while the rest of the students listen and take notes. The GOR approach works best when material is of the appropriate level and length, when there is enough time allotted, and when the approach is used only occasionally to avoid monotony and competitive anxiety. (EL)

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Group Oral Review in the Reading Lab: A Means of Synthesizing Individualized Approaches Applied to One Body of Written Material

Much of the literature available to us indicates that the culture of the student and the cultural group of the classroom comprise a very predominant focus in current trends and theory in research on classroom interaction during reading instruction. Some of the most significant information in this area has been contributed by Cazden (1981), Au (1981), Hess and Takanishi (1974), Labov (1981), and Boraks and Allen (1977). Theories of metacognition, that are also related to the focus of this presentation, have been delineated by Flavell (1976). The findings and assertions of these researchers and theorists indicate the value of the Group Oral Review (GOR) approach.

Cazden (1981) indicates that, although reading is a solitary activity for adults--an internal language process--because we usually read alone, this is not the case for children who are learning to read. She acknowledges the fact that learning to read is a cognitive process, but also defines the act of learning to read as a "very social activity" that is "deeply embedded with teachers and peers." Many Developmental Studies students are, in fact, learning to read. Cazden emphasizes the importance of social activity in the learning to read process.

Au (1981) describes the Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP), designed for Hawaiian children whose reading achievement was low. The success of the program has been credited to two factors: cultural agreement between the students and the content of the stories used by the teacher and cultural agreement between the inherent interactional

patterns of the students and the context or manner in which the stories were taught. The latter, which is referred to by Au as "cultural congruence of context" is further described as "the cooperative interaction among children who build on one another's responses". Au explains that this type of interaction is a special speech event in Hawaiian culture. Findings from this program are said to indicate that, quantitatively, the children became more engaged in reading activity, and that, qualitatively, the focus of their attention changed--from the teacher to each other. These observations suggest that oral interaction between peers makes reading activities more meaningful.

Hess and Takanishi (1974) conducted a study which also emphasizes the importance of social organization. They were involved in the observation of student "engagement" in elementary classrooms in low income communities in an attempt to discover what teachers did to motivate their students in the areas of both math and language arts. The recommendations which evolve from their study are particularly useful to the organization of the reading lab. Hess and Takanishi suggest that teacher-training programs concentrate on the social organization of the classroom instead of more specific behaviors. They also advise that this is an important consideration for competency-based training.

Another significant and relevant contribution has been made by Labov (1981) in his contention that dialect differences are not in themselves the cause of reading problems. He considers dialect differences to be indicators of group membership and group values which are in conflict with the school, and suggests that these value conflicts

are a significant factor in low reading achievement scores. More specifically, Labov has addressed this issue by stating that:

> The techniques of learning and studying imposed by our schools are . . . individualistic and competitive. Each student is expected to learn by himself, and . . .interaction in the classroom is fundamentally confined to dealing direc ly with the teacher. (p.167)

Most interesting among Labov's comments about vernacular cultures is the observation that:

> The skills that are highly developed in vernacular culture depend upon a different strategy. Sports, formal and informal, depend upon close cooperation of groups. The same holds for music . . . Individuals practice by themselves, but the major steps in learning are done in tempo with the group. (p.169)

Here, again, emphasis is placed upon the importance of the group approach, since it has been found to be an integral part of vernacular cultures.

In yet another focus on group process, Boraks and Allen (1977) describe an experimental treatment called "Reciprocal Peer Tutoring" which was compared to a one-way tutor-tutee approach. It was found that the individuals in the reciprocal group made significantly greater improvement in read..g. Boraks and Allen suggest that:

> taking on the role of tutor is beneficial to a child's academic growth since it is necessary to understand a skill or concept personally before trying to explain it to someone else. (p.277)

In terms of Developmental Studies students, we must often take a step back, from consideration of their potential for peer tutoring, to the

possibility of study partnering or a much more basic and individual level of operation such as metacognitive processing. Metacognition is also a function of what Boraks and Allen refer to as being able to understand a skill or concept personally before trying to explain it to someone else. Many students in Developmental Studies programs are, detrimentally, lacking in metacognitive awareness.

Flavell's (1976) explanation of metacognition also supports the value of the GOR approach. According to Flavell, "metacognition refers . . . to the active monitoring and . . . regulation . . . of processes . . . usually in the service of some concrete goal or objective." He gives the following examples:

> I am engaging in metacognition if I notice that I am having more trouble learning A than B; if it strikes me that I should double check C before accepting it as a fact; if it occurs to me that I had better scrutinize each and every alternative in a multiple choice task situation before deciding which is the best one; if I become aware that I am not sure what the experimenter really wants me to do; if I sense that I had better make a note of D because I may forget it; if I think I should ask someone about E to see if I have it right (p. 232)

The GOR approach does engage students in the "service of some concrete goal or objective" in that it requires them to discuss or explain what process they have used in order to interpret, digest, or, in some way, manipulate reading material.

Student Characteristics and GOR Objectives

Some of the most basic characteristics of many of the Developmental Studies reading students can be expressed as the following needs:

1) need continuous reinforcement
2) need strategies for metacognitive awareness
3) need development of a repertoire of approaches toward interpreting, digesting, or manipulating written information
4) need development of confidence
5) need development of appropriate academic classroom behaviors

In view of these needs and of the fact that individualized instruction in the reading lab can often lead to sessions where two or more students complete activities involving totally different sets of skills applied to the same reading material, GOR has been used to synthesize the individual processes into a greater, more meaningful, whole. Some of the objectives of GOR are as follows:

1) to reinforce the process used in a reading assignment
2) to establish a foundation for the development of metacognitive awareness
3) to emphasize the idea that any one skill or process applied to written material as an individual assignment should be seen as only part of a whole set of skills or strategies which must be used in the total act of reading
4) to develop confidence and fluency in oral expression or interpretation of written ideas and the thought processes related to reading

5) to develop the ability to, and recognize the importance of, listening

6) to develop the practice of notetaking

Procedure

The following steps are taken in initiating and completing an assignment for GOR. The procedure involves one piece of written material, to be analyzed by two or more students who will each be assigned to employ different types of skills (eg. identifying main ideas and supporting details, surveying and creating questions to be answered, sequencing details of events, vocabulary building, or interpreting figurative expressions):

1) each student is given an assignment to complete a different one of the above mentioned types of tasks

2) the students are informed that they will discuss their work with the rest of the group when everyone is finished

3) students are required to write complete sentences in fulfillment of tasks

4) the instructor checks each student's progress and assists if necessary

5) when all students are finished (or when time for independent work has elapsed), all students sit in round-table style and, in turn, explain a) what they were supposed to do b) how they went about doing it, and c) what they found or what their answers or interpretations were and why

6) all other students are required to listen and to take notes

Utility of the Approach

The importance of the approach is that it facilitates accomplishment of the objectives, previously stated, which are based on the students needs, and also allows for the following conditions: an alternative to the frequent compartmentalizatin of stude in a lab setting: a means of synthesizing individual perspectives ito one end-product; and a means for individualization according to each student's specific needs with the use of one piece of written material, especially when comprehension of this particular peice of material is crucial to all lab students in attendance. (Frequently, students attending a reading lab are in the same reading class and are, therefore, all responsible for an assignment relating to the same written material.)

The GOR approach works best when a) material is of the appropriate level such that each student can apply the assigned strategy and complete the task b) material is the appropriate length, such that, when completed, there is enough time left in the lab session for GOR, and c) the approach is used only occasionally to allow for variety and deter from monotony and competitive anxiety.

Although actual reading time has been reportedly low in classrooms during reading instruction, it is still essential that students devote some time to the act of processing, verbally, that information which they recceive in print. Students should be engaged in the act of verbalizing the processes that they use to manipulate information during silent reading. From a quantitative perspective, the degree to which GOR is a factor in students' comprehension and success in reading tasks

cannot be ascertained. Qualitatively, the value of GOR emerges in students' responses to their attributions for success on difficult exams. When questioned about success on a challenging final exam in a Developmental Studies reading course, a majority of students reported that they "studied together in their dorm rooms."

GOR is a good vehicle for closure of a lesson or lab session, it facilitates the orchestratrion of individuals and their ideas, it is, in some ways, analogous to the huddle on the football field--it can be used as a stimulator and as a booster of self-confidence and the inclination toward class participation and group study.

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